

**MUSEUM OF TORONTO'S PRESENTS A LOVE LETTER TO THE WOMEN OF TORONTO IN
'THE 52: STORIES OF WOMEN WHO TRANSFORMED TORONTO' – A GROUNDBREAKING
EXHIBITION AND LIVE PERFORMANCE**

The momentous exhibition honours 52 iconic women and their diverse contributions to various aspects of city life, including art, culture, politics, sports, technology, business, and more

Toronto, ON (March 12, 2025) – [Museum of Toronto](#) is pleased to announce the opening of its groundbreaking exhibition, [The 52: Stories of Women Who Transformed Toronto](#) on April 9th. This multidisciplinary exhibition and live theatrical experience took three years to develop and is unlike any other historical presentation. For the first time, a museum exhibition celebrates the lives of 52 women who have inspired and transformed Toronto. The exhibit is organized into themes of science, arts and culture, politics, sports, and civic life. The exhibition will run until December 2025 and will be accompanied by a live theatrical experience June 4-8th, presented in association with Luminato Festival Toronto.

“People are at the center of our work, especially Torontonians. We felt it was important to tell the stories of these 52 iconic women in ways that extended beyond the pages of history books and into mini performances of their lives”, says Heidi Reitmaier, Executive Director of the Museum of Toronto. “We collaborated with over 150 women on this project, and the investor campaign was women-led and funded. This is an extraordinary exhibition, one that you have never seen or heard before. We wholeheartedly encourage everyone to come and visit the free exhibition at 401 Richmond and to book your tickets for the live performances.”

The 52 Project

The project was inspired by the fact that women currently make up 52% of the population in Toronto. That statistic was then translated into the number of iconic women celebrated in this exhibition and informed the name.

These women were firsts in their fields, their pursuits or the trails they blazed. We learn of the first female-owned Chinese restaurant, the first woman to practice law, the first female mayor, the first woman elected to the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, the first female war correspondent, and the female founder of the first Indian dance company, and the author of the first Indigenous work published in Canada.

Highlighted women in the exhibition:

- Adrienne Louise Clarkson (1939-) The 26th governor general of Canada as well as the first racialized person appointed to the vice-regal position.
- Emily Stowe (1831-1903) The first female physician to publicly practise in Ontario and founder of the Canadian Women's Suffrage Association.
- Jackie Shane (1940-2019) Pioneering transgender performer who was a prominent figure in Toronto's R&B scene in the 1960s.
- Josephine Mandamin (1942-2019) Anishinaabe elder, water-rights advocate, and Anishinabek Nation Chief Water Commissioner.
- Margaret Atwood (1939-) Novelist, poet, literary critic, essayist, teacher, environmental activist, and inventor.

- Penny Oleksiak (2000-) Olympic swimmer and Canada's most decorated Olympian, with seven medals overall.

Exhibition at Museum of Toronto

This is no traditional exhibition. To tell these important stories, this project has commissioned 24 exemplary playwrights to write 52 monologues – one for each transformational woman on the list. The award-winning Canadian playwrights include: Aida Jordao, Alex Cameron, Ali Joy Richardson, Anna Chatterton, Cheri Maracle, Coleen MacPherson, Diane Flacks, Erin Shields, Falen Johnson, Jo SiMalaya Alcampo, Jordi Mand, Julia Hune-Brown, Julie Tepperman, Kanika Ambrose, Keira Loughran, Lisa Ryder, Marcia Johnson, Marjorie Chan, Meghan Swaby, Ophira Calof, Sarena Parmar, Sedina Fiati, Shandra Spears and Sharada Eswar. The filmed monologues feature actors from across the country.

The films will be showcased at the exhibition as they tell the stories, both personal and factual, about each of the iconic 52 women. The exhibition highlights the harrowing, exhilarating, heartbreaking and courageous actions and lives of each of the 52 women. Each woman has a filmed monologue dedicated to their stories and entering the exhibition will be like walking onto a stage set that embodies the lives of these women.

The exhibition will also feature personal objects, photographs, letters, and mementos of the women, as well as material culture from our city, displayed throughout the space, drawn from the City of Toronto Archives, Toronto History Museums Fine Art and Artifact Collection and personal collections.

Live Theatrical Experience, presented in association with Luminato Festival Toronto

To bring the project to life, *The 52: Stories of Women Who Transformed Toronto* will also be presented as a series of live theatre performances, June 4-8th at the Luminato Festival Toronto. The City of Toronto archives provides the backdrop for the audience to meet these women and bear witness to the dramatization of the 52 monologues. From a pioneering transgender performer to the first children's librarian, from an Indigenous baseball player to an activist who organized anti-fascist demonstrations, the audience will roam with the players as the experience travels through time from the 1800s to present day. The stories of these women will surprise every audience member. Some are familiar, others untold. And yet without them, Toronto would not be what it is today. Tickets will be available soon at luminatofestival.com

Museum of Toronto Index on Women

Museum of Toronto commissioned a survey to learn more about the women in Toronto. Below are a few highlights.

Population of Toronto who are women: 52%

Homeowners who are women in Toronto: 52%

Condos owned by women in Toronto: 58%

Businesses that are majority-owned by women: 18%

Number of women who have been elected mayor in Toronto: 3

Number of women out of 25 Toronto City Councillors elected to office: 9

Women who are first-time City Councillors: 2

Artists and creative professionals in Toronto who are women: 65%

Percentage of women in Health Care & Social Services industry: 77%

Percentage of women in the Toronto's education sector: 66%

Toronto Transit Commission operators who are women: 16%

Living History, Public Submissions

In a desire to deepen our collective knowledge of the impact the 52% of Toronto has made on the city, the public is invited to nominate their own lists of women who have had a lasting effect on our city. Visitors are encouraged to assist the Museum of Toronto in documenting and preserving the legacies of their nominees through onsite submissions.

Museum of Toronto can be found across social media platforms at [@MuseumofToronto](#) on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and TikTok.

Museum of Toronto is made possible with the generous support of Diane Blake and Stephen Smith.

Museum of Toronto acknowledges that this list is made of women-identified people and that some feminized people use both/either “her” and “they” pronouns.

Exhibition Details

Exhibition opens to the public April 9 and will run until December 20, 2025

Museum of Toronto is located at 401 Richmond Street West, Eastern Entrance, Toronto Ontario.

Museum of Toronto is always free, with donations encouraged

Museum Hours:

Wednesday – Saturday: 12pm – 6pm

Sunday – Tuesday: CLOSED

Media Preview

Media Preview is scheduled for Tuesday, April 8 from 11 am - 1pm. Interviews are available onsite. To register, please email the press contact below.

Media Images, found [HERE](#).

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About Museum of Toronto

Founded in 2015, Museum is Toronto’s City Museum. They offer a collection of experiences that tell the histories of Toronto. Their exhibitions and content aim to evoke curiosity and foster deeper connections between its visitors and the city. With a focus on building a living archive of the city, they strive to be a valuable resource for those interested in the cultural heritage of Toronto. Enjoy Museum's programming in their downtown exhibition space, throughout the city, and online.

Media Contact

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